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Homeless partnership approved

By George Watson

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San Bernardino County has nearly 40 percent more homeless people than it did four years ago, a recent study found.

Armed with the information, the county Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to form the Homeless Partnership, a public-private entity that brings new organizations to help join in the effort to combat homelessness.

"Capitalizing on existing resources and pooling services offered by county departments, cities and local agencies will enable us to effectively address the needs of every segment of our homeless population," said Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who represents the 5th District.

Four new staffing positions will be created to oversee the partnership, costing \$326,000 annually.

The partnership brings together hospitals, businesses, cities, county departments and non-profit organizations, said David Wert, county spokesman.

The study found at least 7,331 homeless persons, a 39.1 percent increase from 2003 when 5,270 homeless persons were recorded.

Of those found this year, 17 percent were in shelters while 83 percent lived on the streets. Of those, 31 percent lived in vehicles such as cars, trucks or campers.

A total of 45 percent were white, 24 percent black, 22 percent Latino and 2 percent each were Asian or American Indian.

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